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In This Issue

WHEN SENATOR JOE LOVED CLARENCE

- Natural Law was Born in Connecticut

GOOD NEWS!

- You Think the New York Times' Tom Friedman is Arrogant, Conceited, Vulgar, Boring, Servile to Power and, Bottom Line, Truly Stupid?
- You Are Not Alone!

WEN HO LEE

- Who Needs to Eat Crow and Tell Him That They're Sorry? Jeff Gerth, James Risen and William Safire, That's Who

FRESNO CALLING

- To Hell With KPFA

They Loved His Views

Gore, Lieberman and Clarence Thomas

What about the Supreme Court? With that question liberal backers of Gore have been attempting to scare progressives, abandoned on nearly every other issue, from jumping on board the Nader bandwagon. Look, they say, at what George W. Bush has said about the kind of person he would put on the court: someone with the judicial philosophy of Antonin Scalia, the court's most malign intellect, or Clarence Thomas, the worst justice draped over the high bench since Rehnquist.

But when asked what kind of judge Gore and Lieberman might hoist onto the court, there's no response, as if the question was unfair. But it doesn't take a tiring trip through the Congressional Record to disclose what kinds of justices Gore and Lieberman thought fit for the bench: namely Scalia and Thomas.

Antonin Scalia was approved by the Senate on Sept 17, 1986 by a vote of 98-0. There were two senators absent: Barry Goldwater and Jake Garn. "I announce that the Senator from Utah [Mr. Garn] and the Senator from Arizona [Mr. Goldwater] are necessarily absent", Sen. Alan Simpson, explained at the time. "I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Utah [Mr. Garn] would each vote "yea". Senator Al Gore voted to confirm Scalia.

Although Gore opposed Clarence Thomas, he did so late and could not resist lavishing praise on someone who has proved to be one of the Court's most incompetent jurists. "Clarence Thomas is an impressive man with an astounding background," Gore told his fellow senators on October 8, 1992. "Even before his nomination to the Supreme Court, he was an inspiration to those who struggled against poverty and racism.... His life shows that adversity need not lead to a life of quiet desperation, but can produce a strength of character that is a beacon for all who will follow... I believe there is no question of Judge Thomas' competence... He possesses a quick and incisive intellect. He speaks and writes with precision, power, and persuasiveness. The term 'hard-working' cannot begin to describe the habits that have taken him so far in so short a time."

Gore ultimately voted against Thomas, citing his reference to members of congress as "petty despots", his fixation on the principles of "natural law" and his reluctance to answer a direct question on his attitude toward the constitutionality of Roe versus Wade.

Lieberman was less conflicted. On October 4, 1991, the senator from Connecticut strode to the well of the senate and gave a pious speech announcing his esteem and support for Thomas. Lieberman confessed to his colleagues that his decision to back Thomas' nomination had been consummated at an intimate one-on-one session with the federal judge in the senator's office. "When I met with Judge Clarence Thomas in my office this past summer, I was impressed by his strength of character, independence of mind, and intellect generally. I found him to be an engaging, thoughtful man who clearly enjoys grappling with complex legal issues and delights in the special challenges and responsibilities of being a judge," Lieberman carolled. "His academic and professional achievements are testimony to his appreciation for the value of hard work and determination—qualities that, in my mind, are too often overlooked in evaluating judi-

(**Thomas** continued on page 5)

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Our Little Secrets

I and I: Friedman's World

It's not the mere fact of Tom Friedman's tedium that's at issue here. Tedium in a pundit is inevitable and, in its own way, soothing. In the days of C.L. Sulzberger, Friedman's remote predecessor on the "foreign affairs" beat on the Times's op ed page, we used to look forward to C.L.'s narcotic musings as eagerly as Coleridge reaching for his opium pipe.

But Sulzberger had the graces of an older world, the decorum of the chancery or the embassy dinner. Friedman's is an industrial, assertive, implacable noise, like having a generator running under the next table in a restaurant. The only sensible thing to do is leave.

Friedman exhibits on a weekly basis one of the severest cases known to science of Lippmann's Condition, named for the legendary journalistic hot-air salesman, Walter Lippmann, and alluding to the inherent tendency of all pundits to swell in self-importance to zeppelin-like dimensions. Friedman's conceit is legendary. "I have won not one, but two Pulitzer prizes, and I won't stand for being called a liar by the next president, " George Stephanopoulos recalls (in his memoir All Too Human) Friedman shouting down the phone during the Clinton transition in early 1993.

Over Washington dinner tables people delightedly swap stories about Friedman's monumental conceit. Not so long ago St Anthony's College, Oxford, held an anniversary bash. During one session in which a passel of alumni offered their reflections on the state of the world, Friedman finally burst out, "I've got the best job in the world, and you're all jealous of me!"

From time to time Treasury Secretary Larry Summers holds soirees in which pundits and wonks in high standing muster to chew the fat and ponder the great issues of the day. The morning after one such session Friedman called one of Summers's assistants to offer his post mortem. He had found it irksome, he said, to listen to opinions other than those of Treasury Secretary Summers and himself. Surely it would have more edifying for the company, Friedman declared, if the evening had consisted simply of a dialogue between the two great men.

Just as C.L.Sulzberger grazed happily across the Olympus of decaying Balkan monarchs Friedman is never happier than when foraging in corporate suites. Open The Lexus and the Olive Tree to almost any page and one finds something like this: "In October 1995, I flew out to Redmond, Washington, to interview Microsoft's number-two man, president Steve Ballmer, in order to ask him one simple question." (So why didn't he e-mail him?)

The use of the first person pronoun in Friedman's work is profuse (e.g., 20 uses of the first person singular in the course of one 34-line paragraph starting on page 20 of the paperback reissue of The Lexus and the Olive Tree). This endlessly intrusive I is permanently locked in an elevator at a Davos Summit of the world's Important People, to whom he pays fervent tribute: " Former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel, economists Henry Kaufman and Ken Courtis, New York Fed president William J. McDonough...[we omit some names in the interests of brevity] World Bank president Jim [not James, please note; the affectation of intimacy is important to Friedman] Wolfensohn all took the time to discuss their views of globalization with me. From the private sector, Monsanto chairman Robert Shapiro, Cisco Systems president John Chambers..."

Like most journalists who spend their time in the corporate elevator, Friedman is an assiduous bootlicker. Out of interest we checked his citations of the Monsanto chairman, Robert Shapiro. Page 87:"Robert Shapiro...is a classic example of a chief executive who revamped the center of his company so the buck could start, not stop there." Page 182: "Robert Shapiro... once remarked to me that his company is not on a crusade for spreading anticorrupt practices. But not paying bribes is how it does its own business, and he is keenly aware that in so doing Monsanto is helping to seed the world with people who share its values." Page 226: "Robert Shapiro... likes to say that there are always a few things that it pays to keep secret..." Page 281: "As Robert Shapiro of Monsanto likeds to say: 'Human population multiplied by human aspirations for a middle-class existence divided by the current technological tool kit is putting unsustainable strains on the biological systems that support life on our planet..."

Yes, this is Robert Shapiro, the world-class asshole who took a company making a buck or two out of Roundup and who almost destroyed it with megalomaniacal over-reach with bio-engineered crops; whose influence-peddling rampages constitute some of the slimiest pages in the history of the Clinton administration; whose technological toolkit in the form of Bt corn has threatened to wipe out the Monarch butterfly.

Friedman is so marinated in self-regard that he doesn't even know when he's being stupid. "While the

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Friedman gave a vivid description of a Shi'ite smashing bottles in the hotel bar. But was Friedman even there?

defining measurement of the Cold War was weight – particularly the throw weight of missiles – the defining measurement of the globalization system is speed..." Sounds good in a corporate round-table, means nothing. The man just isn't that smart, beyond the dubious ability to make money out of press releases praising globalism and American power.

At the start of The Lexus and the Olive Tree Friedman boasts: "How to understand and explain this incredibly complex system of globalization? The short answer is that I learned you need to do two things at once – look at the world through a multilens perspective and, at the same time, convey that complexity to readers through simple stories, not grand theories. I use two techniques: I do 'information arbitrage' in order to understand the world, and I 'tell stories' in order to explain it."

That's one way of putting it. There's another. Back in 1984 CounterPunch editor Alexander Cockburn's brother Patrick, then working for the Financial Times in Beirut, described to us an exacting day covering bloodshed and mayhem in the company of Friedman, at that time the Times's Beirut correspondent. They returned to the Commodore hotel, thankful to be alive. Friedman went up to his room to file. Patrick made for the bar, got a stiff whiskey and sat at a table sipping quietly. Enter a Shi'ite gunman who reviewed the bottles of booze with displeasure and proceeded to smash them methodically with his rifle butt. He didn't notice Patrick, who was glad to be thus unperceived and who concluded that (a) journalists drinking Scotch were unlikely to be viewed with fondness by the fundamentalist gunman and that (b) he was drinking the last Scotch likely to consumed in the Commodore for quite a while.

Eventually Friedman appeared, and Patrick described the episode. A couple of days later a Friedman dispatch noting it appeared in the New York Times. But it wasn't long before the "I" took command. In Friedman's 1989 book From Beirut to Jerusalem we find, "My first glimpse of Beirut's real bottom came at the Commodore Hotel bar on February 7, 1984....I was enjoying a 'quiet' lunch in the Commodore restaurant that day when.." And lo, suddenly it's Friedman who sees the bottle-smasher at work, Friedman who vividly recounts how the Shi'ite "stalked behind the bar" and Friedman who arbitrages the story towards a Deeper Note: "The scene was terrifying on many levels..."

But where wash he? Friedman probably believes that he was in the center of the action. In the capsule of his immense ego the world is what he wants it to be.

SAY YOU'RE SORRY

And talking of the New York Times, does not the newspaper owe an apology to Wen Ho Lee? The collapse of the government's case against Wen Ho Lee last week represents one of the greatest humiliations of a national newspaper in the history of journalism.

On March 6, 1999, the Times carried a report by James Risen and Jeff Gerth entitled "Breach at Los Alamos" charging an unnamed scientist with stealing nuclear secrets from the government lab and giving them to the Chinese Peoples' Republic. The espionage, according to one security official cited by Risen and Gerth, was "going to be just as bad as the Rosenbergs". Two days later Wen Ho Lee, an American of Taiwanese descent, was fired from his job. Ahead of him lay months of further pillorying in a racist witch-hunt led by the Times.

Yet Risen and Gerth's stories had been profuse with terrible errors from the outset. Their prime source had been Notra Trulock, an embittered security official in the Department of Energy intent upon his own vendettas within the DoE. Risen and Gerth swallowed his assertions with disgraceful zeal.

When the forgeries of the wretched Dublin hack Richard Pigott against the Irish nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell were exposed in 1887, he fled to Madrid and there blew out his brains. The London Times required years to efface the shame of its gullibility in printing Pigott's lies. Would that the New York Times was required to admit equivalent error. But it won't. Next year it will no doubt preen amid whatever Pulitzer awards are put its way by the jury of its friends. This is no-fault journalism, and it's a disgrace to the Fourth Estate.

EDITORS ON TOUR

Your CounterPunch editors have been on tour with their book on Gore. If you haven't yet, order now on our 800 line or use the yellow order form in this issue. Dedicated government agents in the US Postal Service (which contains quite a few CounterPunch subscribers) will rush the book to you.) After a stimulating swing through the Pacific Northwest, the editors are now heading east. Here's the October schedule. We hope to meet CounterPunchers along the way. October 7, Everyone's Books, 23 Elliot St, Brattleboro, Vt, 7pm (AC); Oct. 8, Student Union, Indiana U, Bloomington, 7.30pm (JSC); Oct 10, Food for Thought Books, 106 North Pleasant St, Amherst, Mass, 7pm(AC); Oct. 12 Judson Church, 55 Washington Square South, Manhattan, NYC, 7pm (AC&JSC); October 13, Olson's Books, Georgetown, Washington DC, 6.30pm (AC&JSC); Oct. 17, Great Expectations, 911 Foster St, Evanston, Illinois, 7pm; October 18, Seminary Coop, 5757 S. University Avenue, Chicago, 7pm (AC); October 19, Rainbow Bookstore, 426 W. Gilman St, Madison, Wisconsin, 7pm (AC); October 20, Harry Schwartz Books, 219 N. Milwaukee St, Milwaukee, 8pm (AC); October 22, Lucky Lab Pub, Portland, Oregon, 6 pm (JSC); October 24, Cody's Books, 2454 Telegraph Ave, Berkeley, California, 7.30pm (AC&JSC); October 26, City Lights, 261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, 7pm (AC&JSC); October 28, Capitola Book Café, 1475 41st Ave, Santa Cruz, 7pm (AC); October 29, Midnight Special, 1318 Third St, Santa Monica, 5pm (AC); October 30, EDU Now/2000, 309 Pine Ave, Longbeach, Ca, 7pm (AC). CP

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Fresno Air Wars

BY CATHERINE CAMPBELL

CounterPunchers will remember Catherine Campbell as the Fresno-based civil rights attorney who wrote a terrific piece for us last January on "How we steal kids". Here she is again, giving account of how Nice People have given Fresno the shaft.

It's hard to say a good word about Pacifica, it has behaved so badly. But what is unthinkable is to speak unkindly of KPFA, the people's radio station, the legacy of the legendary Lew Hill, radio prophet and near-messiah to those who believe community radio is a life line to Alternative Discussions of Real Issues. KPFA is one of our few vital remnants of the sixties that just might survive into the future if we continue to pay dues, demonstrate in the streets, and never question what goes on at KPFA.

Well, I know only one thing about what goes on at KPFA, and it's not even a very important thing to know. It's not important because it's about Fresno, and as most people from the Bay Area know, Fresno is not important. In fact, the entire Central Valley is unimportant, with the possible exception of Sacramento, which is rumored to be the state capital, although even that is not discussed much, not at KPFA, where the issue is: the Bay Area.

This is true in spite of the Central Valley's pivotal role in state and federal politics. In this town, we cook up very up nasty laws as we throw tri-tip on the barbeque. As Christian Parenti has written, we have one of the most militarized police forces in the nation. The farmers of this Valley direct the flow of water throughout California. We like prisons, and we invite them into our small, depressed farm towns, where the violence of prison life will go unnoticed until inmates are being shot for fun. We lack the culture and talent of the Bay Area, but we have lots of problems. From one perspective, this is where KPFA should be if it really wanted to make a difference.

Fresno has a little radio station, KFCF. I would even call it mousy, like a radio station with acne and dull brown hair cut neither long nor short. For years it has played a bit of jazz, some classical music, some Greek music. Its best genuinely local, peoples' program is probably the Cambodian-language news hour. It plays about 10 per cent local, 90 per cent KPFA. (You know, you hear it all the time, "This is KPFA, KPFB in Berkeley, and KFCF in Fresno.")

The local boys who have been running our station for years call it a "transmitter station". It transmits KPFA into the homes of a few thousand Valley people from Bakersfield to Merced, including all of Fresno, and up into the Sierra. As in the Bay Area, it has a small but intensely loyal audience for obvious reasons: good music and smart talk are at a premium in the Central Valley, and KPFA brings a lot of both into our homes.

But KPFA brings us little about the Central Valley, a place chock-full of all the problems they love to talk about on KPFA: racism, poverty, police brutality, government corruption, prisons, pollution, blight, and more poverty. A third of our children live under the poverty line. In spite of this cornucopia of subject-matter, no one from KPFA ever even inquires about Fresno, but we in Fresno hear all about East Timor, Rwanda, Somalia, Nigeria, and Bosnia, and then, more than all the rest combined, we hear about gentrification in Berkeley, Oakland and the Mission District.

KPFA, where were you when the People called? Do you even know who they are?

So about four years ago, the majority of the board members of KFCF decided to begin gradually increasing local programming. I was a member of that majority, and I blithely assumed most would agree that a town like ours needed a bit of local public affairs programming. Little did I and my pals know that KPFA would soon, and quite suddenly, waken from its somnambulant indifference to the Central Valley long enough to doom our modest aspirations.

From the gate, our efforts met with resistance from the boys, who had been running the station for years, and who were all friends with staff at KPFA. One of them has the station in his home, including all the equipment. Another is the engineer. Another is the station manager. They had decided, years and years ago, that Valley people only wanted KPFA, and are too stupid and unimaginative to run a station, and so - with the exceptions of a few programs they parceled out to their friends - there would be no local programming on KFCF.

Oh, how the battle raged on the fields of Fresno! There was an election, and the majority became the minority. I was still on the board, but other strong local-programming advocates were ousted. Many in the progressive community were outraged. They deemed the election tactics used by the boys unfair, manipulative and un-Fresno. (We have a very small progressive community, and back stabbing is not favored.)

We, the minority board members and many of the progressives in town, mounted a recall effort to wipe the slate clean and elect an entirely new board to run the radio station. For the first time in more than 20 years, it appeared the community would organize sufficiently to take control of the station and make it a truly community-based source of information, entertainment and organizing. No one ever wanted to take KPFA off the air. At most we wanted to improve and increase local programming to the 25 per cent envisioned by our contractual relationship with KPFA.

We called ourselves the Community Radio Coalition, and most of us are Unitarian-like; we live quiet, bookish lives, have reformed our 60s excesses in the shady side of middle age. We were not thrilled to be in combat. It had taken 20 years of rule by the boys to bring us to this pass. It was a crisis of conscience for some in our progressive community, and a handful of our friends voted against us. There were genuine issues, over which smart and good people could differ, but for the most part it wasn't a battle fought fairly, or about those issues.

The boys were tenacious, and (I grudgingly admit), brilliantly deceptive. They now had their friends (the one with the Greek music program, and the one with the classical music program included) on the board, they had exclusive access to the station, its money, its equipment, its office, its computer. Together they developed a plan to defeat the recall: they would accuse us of wanting to take away KPFA! We live with Willie Horton, and get along with him just fine. We can't live without KPFA.

The boys knew that locally, many people whose continued respect they needed would recognize the lie, so they never said this outright on the radio, or in public utterances in the Fresno Bee, but they said it strategically to KPFA. First they sent out an

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anonymous police-tape-yellow flyer to every new voting member of the station saying "Save KFCF. Vote no on Foundation recall! Save our station! Stop the power grab!" as if the station's continued existence was jeopardized by our efforts.

Then, during the closing weeks of the election, when we were most hopeful, KPFA staffers dealt the mortal blow to our chances. The boys successfully lobbied the staff at KPFA to sign a letter that spoke of them in effusive, almost mythic terms as comrades in the great battles with Pacifica, and told Fresno voters that "We understand that supporters of the recall effort want to diminish or even sever the bond between KFCF and KPFA. This would be a tragedy since there is substantial appreciation and financial support in Central California for KPFA programs."

The letter was signed by Jim Bennett, interim manager of KPFA; Larry Bensky, Captain of the Peoples' Army Against Pacifica; Michael Yoshida; Ingrid Hoermann, Phil Oseguenda; Vanessa Tait; Andrea DuFlon; Philip Maldari; Susan Stone; Ed Markman; Denny Smithson; Mary Berg; and Tom Mazzolini. The letter earnestly urged KFCF listeners to be loyal to the boys, not because they had done anything for us, but because they helped KPFA during its crisis. Within days, the letter expanded into a poster appearing in cafes, video stores and nightclubs in key Fresno neighborhoods. It was sent to all new members as they signed up to vote. That letter won the election for the boys by 24 votes, 282 to 306.

And what has KPFA done? KPFA staff members intervened in an election crucial to the small progressive community of the Central Valley. Apparently KPFA staffers did it to keep their loyalists in power, and maintain the status quo. And that status quo? It's undemanding. It's more than undemanding: it's fawning, and uncritical. It plays KPFA 90 per cent of the time. KFCF has never asked KPFA to do a thing for the Central Valley, and that's the way KPFA likes it.

What was most awful and disappointing for us was that KPFA staffers swallowed the lie that we wanted to end KPFA programming, and their profession of faith in that complete fabrication convinced many here that community people they previously respected, or had no reason to doubt, were perpetrating a massive fraud. The Community Radio Coalition was taking over a station we all love, against the wishes of the community we love even more. Not one of the KPFA staffers who signed that letter ever talked with us. They never responded when we called or wrote to them. Only one has responded to e-mails sent since the election asking each one, individually, why he or she signed the letter. (The one response? "Welcome to 'democracy.'")

Dennis Bernstein, not one of the signers, did call me early one Saturday morning, hopping mad about my e-mails. He ranted at me for an hour, then wrapped up his diatribe by calling me a "fucking liberal". "Well", I thought but didn't say, "you scratch an ideological radical with a turf to protect, and you get a reactionary". He hung up on me when I said KPFA doesn't give a fig about the Valley. KPFA, the gold standard of journalistic integrity, the ultimate mouse that roared, the phoenix rising out of Pacifica's slash and burn — where were you when The People called? Do you even know who they are? CP

(**Thomas** continued from page 1)

cial nominees, but the importance of which cannot be overstated because being a good judge requires the willingness to do hard work. Indeed, his entire life is an inspiring example of what an individual who has faith, ability, and a desire to work can achieve in this country, even in the face of the worst kinds of prejudice and adversity. As he himself has said, 'Only in America.'"

Lieberman, the former attorney general of Connecticut, claimed to have given Thomas a private grilling on the finer points of his judicial philosophy, his understanding of precedent and the intent of the framers of the Constitution. Thomas passed the Lieberman exam with flying colors. "I was reassured by his answers", Lieberman said. "He did not and does not strike me as a rigid ideologue. In fact, his life story demonstrates that he does not find easy comfort in convention, but challenges settled truths with vigor and intelligence."

While many Democrats, including Gore, were unnerved by some of Thomas' writings and speeches, Lieberman said that it was unfair to evaluate the judge on such arcana. Instead, Lieberman scrutinized Thomas' court opinions and again found no cause for concern. "Judge Thomas' judicial opinions...have a distinctly different cast. They are, on the whole, solid, thoughtful and balanced."

For most liberals and constitutional scholars, Thomas' fanatical adherence to the crack-pot religio-legal theory of "Natural Law" was enough to send him packing. Lieberman, however, not only dismissed this as an issue, he actually made a quasi-endorsement of its legal validity. "The uproar over Judge Thomas' exploration in his writings of principles of natural law is curious and, I fear, on the part of some of should know better, disingenuous. "Jurists of all persuasions have looked to higher principles in interpreting the Constitution and have found emanations and penumbras and original intent. Indeed, natural law as applied to debate over equal rights—which is how Judge Thomas limited it in his conversation with me and in his testimony—has a distinquished history in our nation and, in fact, I am proud to say found its origins in my state of Connecticut."

Despite Lieberman's averrals, Thomas had embraced the Natural Law creed in two other areas, abortion and separation of powers. He extolled a Heritage Foundation white paper by Lewis Lehrman which used a natural law approach to conclude that at the moment of conception fetuses are entitled to the full protection of the constitution. Thomas said he found the Lehrman essay "a splendid example of applying natural law." (Both Lieberman and Gore expressed similar views on the sanctity of the fetus.)

Lieberman also passed over Thomas' hysterical excoriation of William Rehnquist for his betrayal of the principles of Natural Law in a 1990 Supreme Court case on the independent counsel law. The ruled on a 7-1 vote that Congress could legally appoint an

(**Thomas** continued on page 6)

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(**Thomas** continued from page 5)

independent counsel to investigate wrongdoing by high-ranking Federal officials. Typically, Scalia was the lone dissenter. Scalia fulminated that the theory of natural law prohibited the Congress from appointing special prosecutors, no matter how serious the criminal allegations against the executive official. Ridiculously, Thomas was so overwrought that he pronounced the case the most important since Brown verses Board of Education and angrily chided Rehnquist for his cowardice in siding with the "judicial interventionists".

At the time of the pre-Anita Hill hearings for Clarence Thomas, there was much debate over the "litmus test" questions. Pro-choice Democrats wanted to know if Thomas had given the Bush team assurances that he would join with Scalia in attempting overturning Roe v. Wade. (David Souter, nominated by George H. Bush, had apparently kept his views on the matter to himself during his vetting by C. Boyden Gray, only to emerge later as one of the strongest pro-choice voices on the bench and, overall, the most reliable liberal, aside from the Ford-nominated Justice Stevens.)

Lieberman, however, denounced such inquiries of Thomas as evidence of impolite nosiness. On controversial issues, Lieberman prefers a don't ask, don't tell approach for federal judges. "I take Judge Thomas at his word, given under oath, that he has not reached a conclusion on the legal issues underpinning Roe versus Wade", Lieberman said. "Those who doubt that and assume he has passed a White House litmus test on the issue also have to assume that the next nominee would face the same testing...I find myself in the minority in suggesting that Judge Thomas and other nominees should express fewer, rather than more, opinions on controversial constitutional cases that have been heard by the Court, or are likely to be heard by the Court."

Lieberman expressed his outrage about "the politicization of the judicial nominations process....and the tendency...to treat the Supreme Court appointments as just one more campaign promise". Ever the DLC Democrat, Lieberman then went on to attack his liberal senate colleagues (mainly Patrick Leahy) for their tough questioning of Thomas during the initial round of hearings. "I have concluded that the dissatisfaction I felt after the Thomas hearings is more a reflection of...the shortcomings of the process, of which I see Judge Thomas as a victim rather than an indictment of his abilities or character...We must not deny him entrance because we are disturbed by how political the nomination process has become, or because we are concerned about the direction that previous nominees, already confirmed by the Senate and sitting on the Court, may take. In my opinion, it would be unfair and unjust to this man, Clarence Thomas."

"Even before his nomination to the Court, he was an inspiration to those who struggled against poverty and racism."

Even after NPR's Nina Tottenberg unearthed Anita Hill, Lieberman remained steadfast in his loyalty to Thomas. In a speech on the Senate floor on October 8, he announced that while he supported an internal investigation of the charges he still supported the nomination. Indeed, Lieberman claimed that he and his staff had conducted their own inquiry into to Hill's charges and had found nothing to back them up. "I have contacted associates, women who worked with Judge Thomas during his time at the Department of EEOC", Lieberman declared. "And in the calls that I and my staff made, there has been universal support for Judge Thomas, and a clear indication by all of the women we spoke to that there was never, certainly not, a case of sexual harassment, and not even a hint of impropriety."

After the Hill hearings, Lieberman backed down. Ralph Nader has told us that he played a role in convincing Lieberman to shift his vote. But his initial support of Thomas makes clear that Lieberman was more than willing to back a bumbling jurist who clings to outlandish legal theories based on the "divine inspiration" of the Constitution. Of course, Lieberman is believes that the First Amendment means "freedom of religion, not freedom from religion."

But it is Gore himself who sinks the argument now advanced by his adherents that a vote for Gore/Lieberman is a vote to save the Supreme Court from falling into the hands of Visigoths. In his torturous rumination on the Thomas vote Gore said: "In reviewing Judge Thomas' judicial philosophy, I have not considered whether he is a conservative or a liberal. In the history of the Supreme Court, choices made on such a basis have had a way of backfiring." CP

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Gore: "There's No Question of Judge Thomas' Competence".

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